

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell, August 15, 1897

Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to his Father. Sunday — August 15, 1897. My dear Papa:

It appears to me that your relations with Miss Fuller are in a very critical condition and I think it well therefore to put down at once in black and white the views I expressed last night in order that there may be no misunderstanding of my position in the matter.

The question of the ownership of the home is a minor matter. Your house, very much against my will I can assure you has been transferred to me and Mabel. We don't need it and would be glad to give it back to you — to give it to Miss Fuller, or to do anything with it that you and she may decide upon. For example — we would give its equivalent in money towards a new house for you and Miss Fuller if you preferred that. Don't let the house-question stand in the way for we will do anything that you and she want. This, as I said before, is only a minor matter. The really important thing is a marriage settlement securing to her in permanence the independent income she now enjoys. In her case this seems to be an absolutely necessary preliminary to marriage because a very large proportion of her income, as we know, is used in the support of her widowed sister's family — and it will be necessary for her to assist them in the future as she has done in the past.

My proposition is that a Trust Fund be formed amounting to fifty thousand dollars to be deposited with the American Security and Trust Company of Washington, D. C., the income to be paid to Miss Fuller during her life. My idea is that you should put into this Trust as much as you feel you can afford and that I should make up the balance of fifty thousand dollars.

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1. I propose that you should deposit with the American Security and Trust Company — securities to the amount of not less than thirty thousand dollars with instructions to pay over the income to Miss Fuller during her life and after her death to pay over the Principal to you yourself personally; or, in the event of your death to dispose of it in accordance with the provisions of your Will; or — failing a Will — the amount to be paid to your heirs or legal representatives.

2. In a similar way I shall be glad to deposit with the American Security and Trust Company securities to an amount not exceeding twenty thousand dollars. The income to be paid to Miss Fuller during her life; and, after her death the Principal to be paid to the Trustees, or legal representatives of the Volta Bureau, for the use of the Bureau.

My idea is that your Trust Fund and my Trust Fund together should amount to fifty thousand dollars yielding an income of at least twenty-five hundred dollars.

Miss Fuller's present income exceeds twenty -eight hundred dollars to be raised next year, I understand, to three thousand dollars.

I think therefore that the least we can do is to guarantee 3 her an independent income of twenty-five hundred dollars.

Your loving son, Alexander Graham Bell.